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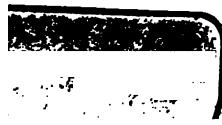


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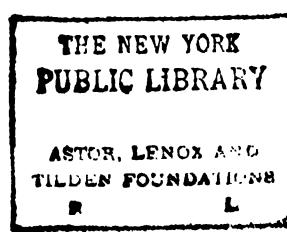
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## THE LITTLE LAND

*PUBLISHER'S ANNOUNCEMENT:*  
*SPKENARD: A Book of Devotional Love*  
*Poems, by Laurence Housman, with*  
*cover designed by the Author. Small*  
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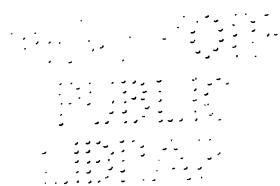
# THE LITTLE LAND

WITH SONGS FROM  
ITS FOUR RIVERS

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BY

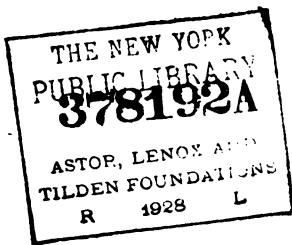
LAURENCE  
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N 13



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OLIVER  
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TO  
**HERBERT ALEXANDER**  
IN FRIENDSHIP



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**I.**

**B**



## THE LITTLE LAND.

### THE GOD AT PLAY.

*(On a child playing by the water.)*

**I**N the hollow of his hand  
My child holds a little land :  
Lord of all that land is he !  
There are hills and meadows green,  
There a river meets the sea ;  
And between,  
On a rock an island town  
Takes its stand,  
Looking down  
Over all the pleasant lea.  
And its ramparts are the band  
Of a crown,  
Steeple-crested, gemmed and grand,  
Lording all that little land,  
So fair to see  
In my child's hand !

Out to sea the fighting fleets,—  
 Round the walls the fighting men  
 Bannered go.  
 Faint from inland fold and pen  
 White flock bleats  
 And cattle low:  
 Autumn hoards, and summer heaps,  
 Ploughman ploughs, and reaper reaps,  
 Over sluggard winter leaps  
 Light-foot spring ;  
 Peace is priest, and Plenty, king :  
 Since a kind god wills it so,—  
 So to be from long ago,  
 In this lazy little land,  
 So fair to see  
 In my child's hand !

Little land is all asleep,  
 Resting at the sabbath-bell :  
 High upon its rocky perch,  
 Grounded deep,  
 Goes the gadding town to church :—  
 Goes to pray in pious speech,  
 Goes to let the preacher preach :  
 And as there folk sit and nod,  
 All the while a tired god  
 Lets the river rise and rise,  
 Sets the shoreward tide to flow

Up the land in soft surprise :  
Ah, heigho !  
How the happy sheepfolds go,  
How the farms like islands show !  
How of all the little land  
Nothing soon is left to stand  
Save the town, a place of woe,—  
Spired crown and rampart-band—  
This,—of all the little land  
So fair to see  
In my child's hand !

## BLOOD IN AUTUMN.

THE heart of the year lies smitten  
And heaves its burden by ;  
And over the grass the kitten  
Sets withered leaves to fly :  
Tattered, and torn, and bitten,  
They still refuse to die.

The wind of life is in them,  
It follows their feeble flight ;  
The kitten can never thin them  
Though prettily shows her spite,  
That lets them free to spin them  
New lives for her delight.

O kitten, O little kitten,  
Play on and do your best !  
Wherever the frost has bitten  
Is blood upon autumn's breast ;  
The heart of the year lies smitten  
But cannot turn to rest !

## PUSS IN WINTER.

WITH a pit-pat  
That one hardly hears,  
The snow-white cat,  
From the hill where she sat,  
Comes over the moor  
And rubs at the door  
And purrs.

Puss, puss,  
From your velvet feet  
You have shaken your shoes,  
And your fur flies loose :  
Wherever you moult  
Comes a winding sheet  
On the holt.

Paws, paws,  
Heavy with down,  
Your icicle claws  
Have caught hold of the town :  
You are holding its breath !  
You are holding it down  
Like death !

Slow, slow,  
 You creep to the chinks :  
 No breath can go  
 Through door or shutter :  
 No sound you utter ;—  
 You watch like a lynx  
 Its foe.

Mute, mute,  
 At the myriad tread  
 Of your white foot  
 The town stays dead :  
 Over each sill  
 Goes the soft white frill  
 Of your head.

Mouse, mouse,  
 The claws say “ come !  
 Come out of the house ! ”  
 But the door stays dumb :  
 And the house-mouse bides  
 With his heart in his sides  
 Grown numb.

Cat, cat,  
 The little mouse pries :  
 He waits and sighs  
 For the sorrow to part :—

For the “pit-pat”  
(He is waiting for that!)  
The “pit-pat”  
Of your melting heart!

Pause, pause,  
Till a sound of pity  
From the cat’s heart flows  
Through the leaguered city :  
Till the cold heart thaws  
On its cushion of snows ;  
And back she draws  
(While the little mouse peeps)  
Her icicle claws,  
And sleeps.

## THE APPLE OF WINTER.

**A** PPLE and leaf have left the bough ;  
 The robin is the apple now.  
 There peeps between his winter coat,  
 The red round apple of his throat ;  
 You see how red it is, and strong,  
 Because it is so ripe with song.

And all the while its ripeness drops,  
 He sings and sings and never stops ;  
 Though all the rest stays russet-brown,  
 His breast keeps moving up and down :  
 And oh, so red, and oh, so ripe  
 Are all the tunes he has to pipe !

What inward ripeness that must be !  
 Its single song loads all the tree ;  
 As if a thousand apples were  
 Pushing their sweetness out in air.  
 I wonder if the sleeping root  
 Knows what a load it bears of fruit ?

The side of him that's next the sun  
 Shows ripe, but never overdone :  
 So short a day, such little heat  
 Are just enough to keep him sweet ;  
 And when to quit the tree he tries,  
 He never falls, he only flies.

Oh, if the apples leaved in gold  
 Had only such a song to hold,  
 With fruity voices to the air  
 Telling the world when ripe they were :  
 How good to have their songs for guides  
 Come beating from their ripened sides !

Then we should hear them cry, "Be quick !  
 We're ripe to-day, and right to pick !"  
 And piping through the orchard town—  
 "My cheeks are red, my pips are brown !"  
 Straight they would tumble at our feet :  
 And we would pick them up and eat.

Apple and leaf have left the bough ;  
 The robin is the apple now.  
 He is the apple of my eye ;  
 But when he leaves the tree to fly,  
 I wonder if the sleeping root  
 Knows it has lost its load of fruit ?

## THE ELFIN BRIDE.

**A**CROSS the land, along the waste  
 That lies before the town,  
 A long procession, laggard-paced,  
 Of woods came marching down.

“A far way off we see she comes!” the happy people cried;  
 And up within the steeple, how the bells rang for the Bride !

“She’s clothed in white, she wears a ring ;  
 And oh, she shines like gold !  
 So red and gold and white a thing  
 Did any before behold ? ”

To kiss her feet the flood grew still, and every gate flew  
 wide,  
 And all the bells ran ringing down the hill to meet the  
 Bride !

Amid the scarlet of her lips  
 The laughter buds and brims ;  
 And up the hill, as up she trips,  
 The royal river swims.

Her hair’s a golden lattice blown out at either side,  
 And back the bells come ringing up the hill to bring the  
 Bride.

The king within his palace  
 Leaped up from off his throne,  
 And her lips were like a chalice  
 When he set them to his own.

“And you, my Love beloved,” he cried, but at the word  
 grew dumb.

“Have come, Beloved!” the bells replied, “Have come,  
 have come, have come!”

She turned about, she beckoned back  
 The wild-woods with her eyes;  
 The trees stood still upon the track,  
 The river ceased to rise.

“Go back,” she said, “dear kinsmen, and range away at  
 will!”

And water-flood and wild-wood went thundering down the  
 hill.

Up over roof and rafter  
 She heard the iron birds  
 Tongue out, and fell from laughter  
 To little lisping words :

“And I, my Love, beloved,” she cried, and then joy held  
 her dumb,

“Have come, Beloved!” the bells replied, “Have come,  
 have come, have come.”

## THE MAGIC WOOD.

I CAME to the edge of the magic wood :  
 My footfall stopped, and my pulses dropped ;  
 And oh, with a will  
 My heart stayed still !  
 And under my brain, that the low boughs topped,  
 A bubble broke,  
 And a wonder woke  
 And I came to myself, and I understood.

A long bough leaned across and dropped  
 An acorn down, and the acorn split :  
 And out, and forth, there chirped and hopped  
 A twig,—green spring in the sprigs of it,  
 And wing-like leaves to flit and go  
 Wherever the wind had wit to blow.

Then one more down, and a thousand fell :  
 And off pell-mell through the woodland brown  
 They broke like folk through a market-town,  
 Where thickens and quickens  
 The crowd, and—“ Chickens ! ”—  
 The cry is, “ Spring chickens, spring chickens to sell ! ”

For one was plump, and thickly plumed ;  
 And one was crested, and combed and groomed ;  
 And one was long in the legs and spurred :  
 And one was a very broth of a bird.  
 And one,—so soon as I looked thereat

My heart cried pat,  
 “But I must have that !”

So off I set, at chivvy and chase,  
 Ah me ! my legs, 'twas a corkscrew race :  
 For the chick was quick,—had spirit and pace,  
 And its spirit was high, and its pace was good ;  
 And first to left, then round to right,  
 And now on foot, but again in flight,  
 It had almost flown  
 On a way of its own,  
 When it passed the pale of the magic wood—  
 And there fell flat !

Its footfall stopped, and its pulses dropt,  
 And oh, with a will,  
 Where it lay so still,  
 I covered it up with my hat.

After a bit, when I lifted it—  
 One small corner—  
 Peeping thereunder,  
 Grief and wonder left me a mourner :

Nothing was there, but a withered leaf!  
Now I ask of me, who was the thief?

I lay on the edge of the magic wood :  
And under my brain that a low bough topped  
Conscience awoke, and the wonder broke,  
And I came to myself, and I understood.

## UNDERGROWTH.

O H, Earth, whose wings are full of eyes,  
 The waiting eyes of bird and beast,  
 All questioning of man more wise,—  
 Of man ! who understands the least,  
 Down looking through their dumb surmise,  
 How came *his* light to be increased ?—

Beneath the shadow of thy wings,  
 Would I might bring my brain to rest ;  
 And come thereby on stealthier springs  
 Of insect-wisdom, working best  
 Free from this outward sight of things,  
 These troubled glimpses of our quest :

Or, out of reach of grief or mirth,  
 Below the sense of light or sound,  
 Where—rooted lovers of the earth,  
 And nearer nestlings of the ground  
 Than bird or beast—sealed looks man least  
 May look into, soft eyes lie bound.

The garden eyes, the woodland eyes,  
 Green-cradled, dewy-fresh from birth,  
 At sight whereof an old surmise  
 Questions what view they take of earth ;  
 And a familiar pain replies,—  
 Nay, what can such blind looks be worth ?

Their looks are wild, their looks are tame ;  
 Yet, upward looking all they can,  
 The deep division is the same  
 'Twixt their young eyes and man.

This startled gaze, this gaze of trust,  
 Of eyes that are both wild and tame !  
 That in their bondage have no shame,  
 Nor grief if from the garden thrust :—  
 As knowing how once a Gardener came  
 And set their feet to dust.

They watch, with eyes from some far dawn,  
 By some far onward dawn sufficed ;  
 Remembering through the night long-drawn  
 Across a twilight faintly spiced,  
 How once, where whisp'ring shade enticed,  
 And danced upon a dappled lawn,  
 Deep in their woods a startled faun  
 Held gaze upon the sleeping Christ.

## ST. PETER'S FISH.

FOUR fishes swam on St. Peter's tower,  
 Against the wind through shine and shower,  
 Four were they, and they swam with power  
 Up the stream of the strongest gale.  
 None might choose 'twixt two or four  
 Which the lesser or which the more ;  
 Wind and sun set equal store  
 On each from gill to gilded tail.

But the one St. Peter loved the best  
 Was the one that swam the nighest the west :  
 He had no signal crown or crest,  
 Nor other mark his praise to tell.  
 As Saints can see, man sees not yet ;  
 We know not how their hearts are set :  
 From Heaven St. Peter loosed his net  
 And caught the fish he loved most well.

Since then each day through shine and shower  
 Three fishes swim on St. Peter's tower :  
 Against the gale they swim with power,  
 And none of them all is least or best.

The people, looking up from the town,  
Point and tell how a wind blew down  
The craziest vane from its battlement-crown,  
The one that swam the nighest the west.

To every gale with tails at tether  
He and his fellows had swum together,  
Out of doors in all kinds of weather,  
Whatever the wind that God thought best.  
His back hath been stroked by the golden key,  
He swimmeth now in a crystal sea.  
Fish of St. Peter, pray for me—  
“ Fisherman Peter, find him rest ! ”

## THE DEATH OF ST. CHRISTOPHER.

**C**HRIStOPHER, who bore our Lord  
 On his shoulder through the ford,  
 After years (his great reward)  
 One glad day lay down to die.  
 From his body, limb by limb,  
 Labour he put off from him,  
 Till he heard a passer-by  
 Stand before the ford and cry.

When he heard the summons sound,  
 Christopher rose up from ground ;  
 Forth he went on duty bound,  
 Murmuring : “ Lest I work amiss,  
 Christ must give me strength for this :  
 This my latest labour is ! ”  
 When he reached the ford at length,  
 Spake the Voice of all his bliss,  
 Saying, “ Christ shall give thee strength ! ”

Humble, bowed, and very faint,  
 At His Feet fell down the Saint,  
 At His Feet fell down to pray,  
 “ Lord, I have not strength to-day,

Thou must go some other way !  
 These old limbs can lift no more  
 That dread weight which once they bore.”

In his face the Holy Child  
 Looked and smiled ;  
 And His Voice grew full and wide,  
 Many waters multiplied,  
 Saying : “ Oh, Christopher, let be !  
 Since thou once didst carry Me,  
 I am come to carry thee.”

Very gently from his knees  
 Lifted him the Prince of Peace ;  
 Wonderful and Counsellor,  
 In His Hands the Saint He bore ;  
 He, the everlasting Lord,  
 Carried him across the ford.

Underneath, a level road  
 All the trodden waters flowed ;  
 Not a wave was dispossessed  
 That the Heavenly Bearer pressed,  
 With the Saint upon His Breast.  
 “ When,” said He, “ My weight did hurt,  
 Thou My beast of burden wert.  
 Now for thee, My child and lamb,  
 I the beast of burden am.”

## THE CITY OF SLEEP.

**M**ANIKIN, maker of dreams,  
 Came to the city of sleep :  
 The watch was on guard, and the gates were barred,  
 And the moat was deep.

“Who is on my side, who ?”  
 Moonbeams rose in a row :  
 He tuned them loud betwixt town and cloud ;  
 But his voice was low.

He sang a song of the moon  
 For loan of her silver beams ;  
 Misty and fair, and afloat in air,  
 Lay the ladder of dreams.

He harped by river and hill ;  
 And the river forgot to flow,  
 And the wind in the grass forgot to pass,  
 And the grass to grow.

For he harped to the heart of earth  
 Where honey in hive lies sweet :

And that sound leapt through the gates, and crept  
Through the silent street.

Manikin, maker of dreams,  
He pursed his lips to pipe:  
Since truth and lie are for wringing a-wry  
When the times are ripe.

He piped at the hearts of men:  
And dreamers rose up straight,  
To drift unbarred by the drowsy guard,  
And beyond the gate.

He piped the dream of the maid:  
And her heart was up and away;  
And fast it beat and hurried her feet  
To the gates of day.

He piped the dream of the mother,  
The cry of her babe for food:  
And she rose from rest to give it the breast;  
And that was good!

He piped the dream of the child:  
And into its hands and feet  
Came tunes to play of the live-long day;—  
And that was sweet!

He piped to the heart of youth :  
And the heart of youth had sight  
Of love to be won, and a race to run ;  
And that was right !

He piped the song of age :  
And that was a far-off song,—  
When life made waste and the mouth could taste :—  
But that was wrong !

Manikin, maker of dreams,  
Had piped himself to sleep :  
The watch was on guard, and the gates were barred,  
And the moat was deep !



## II.







## AS THE FLOCKS FOR THE BROOKS.

**A**s the flocks for the brooks,  
 As the river for the sea,  
 So mine eyes long for thy looks,  
 I for thee.

As the sun drinks up the dew,  
 As the fire burns up the coal,  
 So Love strikes through and through  
 To my soul.

My spirit wastes like smoke,  
 My body burns like fire ;  
 Denial was but the cloak  
 To my desire.

Wherefore did strife seem good  
 Or strength a goal to gain ?  
 When the fire came to the wood,  
 All was vain !

Oh, Beloved, if thou get heat  
 By any pain in me,  
 Then is the pain most sweet :  
 Let it be !

Only make this be true,  
And plain that I may see :  
As the sun draws up the dew  
Draw thou me !

When far, feel thou me near !  
When heavy of heart, oh, haste :—  
Drain me to death, for fear  
Lest I waste !

Lest, betwixt lip and lip  
Of loves that thirst and cry,  
The cup of offering slip,  
And I die !

## OF LOVE AS A MIRROR.

SHOW me what measure has my love to be,  
That with thy will it may find fellowship !

Thou, the creator of it, give decree  
Whether it show or hide, stand up or trip :  
Whether thy will is that it run or stay,  
Wax being honoured, or with grieving wane,  
Do as thou biddest it, or disobey,  
Boldly be rich, or waste itself in vain !

So teach it the complexion of its art  
That in thy view it may thy thought reflect,  
And thou—by taking it into thy heart—  
Be only of thyself more circumspect,  
To gather, from the fair true things it shows,  
All those dear parts of thee that my love knows !

## OF SELF-LOVE.

**S**HOW me what self in thee doth disallow  
Lest with weak giving-in thy soul grow slack :  
So will I strengthen what is weakness now,  
It shall be virtue ere 'tis rendered back.  
Ah, could I on myself thy weakness take,  
And with my strength repay it thee again,  
Then thou shouldst gain a heart too strong to break,  
While I on thee might break my heart in vain !

Show, then, what dear self-love might wish for ease,—  
All that thou likest least and likest best ;  
That I for thee may make my toil at these,  
And thou mayst have thy pleasure at thy rest.  
Yet still thou failest when so teaching me :  
Thou canst not love thyself as I love thee !

## OF HOLY OBEDIENCE.

DEAR love, but read me right and reckon true  
 How love of thee hath featured all my mind ;  
 Till in my will 'tis thine that I pursue,  
 And in my face thy looks I wish to find.  
 For having eyes that worship at thine eyes,  
 And senses all to thy clear guidance bent,  
 Even as a pool takes colour from the skies  
 So from thy grace hath grace to me been lent.

Yea, by this test I in my own love stand,  
 And out of mine own self get touch with thee :  
 Because my hand hath rested on thy hand  
 Therefore is its poor use grown sweet to me;  
 And for my lips, since they thy word obey,  
 Them I love too : but in another way.

## HOW LOVE PUTS OUT LOVE'S DREAM.

WHEN thou art with me, then my heavy brain  
Puts off its traffic, and resumes its rest ;  
And thought, which stood thine absence to sustain,  
Slacks its o'er-laboured head upon thy breast.  
For where thou art not fancy fills thy place,  
And mind rears up a monument to thee ;  
Since to have tidings of thy distant face  
My brain must ever at such building be.

Then thou dost wrong, sweet love, to draw so near,  
If, coming, thou a second self dost slay ;  
For I, at rest with looking on my dear,  
Must let that ghostly other slip away ;  
And thou, being with me, hast love's dream undone ;  
But, being absent, art increased by one.

## OF A CAUSE THAT IS PAST PLEADING.

O LOVE, who know'st my cry and all my prayer,  
Since my deep groaning is not hid from thee,  
Why should my breath so smite the empty air,  
Or words so brand the fire which burns in me ?  
Thou know'st : and be thou cruel, or be thou kind,  
Both ways most bound at thy dear feet I fall :  
For though I have not thee, thou hast my mind,—  
New prayer can give thee naught, nor aught recall.

Oh, be not thou like those who at their ease  
Observant of the player's pains do sit ;  
Or judges savage in their just decrees,  
Who love the prayer, but love not granting it :  
Nor be thou like the gods—would have us cry,  
Demanding more, that they may more deny !

## THE BODY'S COMPLAINT OF ITS BURDEN.

MY body as an Atlas bears the weight  
Of that dear Heaven, which I may never see,  
Whose load of love hangs like a load of hate :  
Be it love or hate, blind to it must I be !  
Thus bowed and burdened, am I never free  
To rest mine eyes upon the load I bear ?  
Oh, to thy threshold, where I waste and wear,  
Stoop down but once, my Heaven, and kiss thou me !

Or, if not so, let the plumed feet of Time  
Break up this live-long utterance of my moan,  
And freeze my senses in the death which hangs  
Round sterile beauty all its poisoned fangs ;  
Till from the clasp of this unhappy clime  
My body turns to everlasting stone.

### THE SOUL'S COMPLAINT OF LOVE'S ABSENCE.

STRANGE children in my breast thine absence breeds,  
Fierce ghosts of love insatiable as fire,  
That break my slumber with their hasty greeds,  
And rob my spirit of its clear desire.  
And where I would not, there they lead my feet ;  
And what I wish not, therewith feast mine eyes ;  
Till to make bitter loneliness seem sweet  
My thought consents to what my soul denies !

O, dear, pure vision of all love on earth,  
Why tarriest thou from me in any land ?  
Return and rid me of this monstrous birth :  
On my racked senses lay thy healing hand !  
For, in my dreams, I give my faith the lie,  
And shuddering wake and pray lest this be I !

## OF GRIEF WASTED.

LOVE, if my too sad singing hurts thy pleasure,  
Learn how thy too long absence loads my grief!  
For if with words my sorrow I could measure  
I might bring home my love to thy belief.  
But now an alien strange of speech it strayeth,  
And all unwelcome breathes into thine ear  
Its tale of Time, where Time his tread delayeth  
Fast rooted in the absence of my dear.

If by my will I could bid well be doing,  
To win thy pleasure were my pleasure set :  
Like leans to like : yet were I now not suing,  
If love, by grieving, grieving could beget :  
For this would be all Paradise to gain,  
Could I but hear thy heart for mine complain.

## OF TIME LOST.

HY will hath worn the travelling face of Time  
 And made his little moments seem an age :  
 Lest his first promise should fly up to prime,  
 Thy silence round his wings becomes a cage.  
 For thee his minstrel-sands have ceased to run,  
 Nor ever shall he sound his note of noon ;  
 Since by the word once given, but straight undone,  
 Thy lips have emptied his poor lips of tune.

So hath my love lost Time for thy dear sake,  
 While thou hast never yet found Time for me ;  
 Time that I wish to give thou wilt not take,  
 Nor even to my hopes grant Time to be.  
 But thy dear fame, if I might make my verse  
 Keep Time with thee, all ages should rehearse.

## TO LOVE, THE DESTROYER.

LORD of my harvest, thou hast reaped my earth  
And left it bare of vintage or of grain :  
Wilt thou not ever come and bless my dearth,  
Seeing that for thy sake all my fields lie slain ?  
Oh, cast a little kindness to the land  
That dies of thee : lest, when a year runs by,  
No second harvest spring to meet thy hand,  
And there be nothing left in me to die !

How can I think of thee, nor wish to give ?  
How without thee can giving cast its seed ?  
How without giving can I hope to live,—  
Since giving love is all my soil may breed.  
So sow, that my sad earth its load may keep ;  
And in a new year come again and reap !

## OF LOVE'S FREEHOLD.

WHILE I am warm, dear love, thine honours live :  
So long as tongue can build a home for sound  
To fill with thy repute, this will I give  
That men may find thy name on holy ground.  
Since Love, which sent thee hither to be loved,  
Hath here set up his dwelling-place of clay,  
As walls to hold his word my use is proved :  
I do but worship as he bids me say.

So this it is which shows my love its right,  
And, though my want endures, maintains my worth,  
Within this temple to set up thy light,  
And sound thee to the common ears of earth :  
Nor shalt thou lack that praise the gods devise,  
Till in this house of clay Love buried lies.

## THE LOVER TO THE BELOVED.

**D**O you deserve, dear love, that I should love you ?  
Show me to serve, one single thing above you,  
Where I may find  
One truer to my mind :  
And I will leave you straight,  
And seek that other fate !

Oh, Love sets not his claim on best, but nearest !  
So close you came to my request, my dearest,  
So near my need,  
By bitter fate decreed,  
Though you grow slack  
I find no turning back.

Ah, Love, my heart knows beyond all denying,  
Whate'er your will, my will is, living, dying ;  
So, by your will,  
Denial holds me still,  
Lest loving without end  
Too far, I lose my friend !

## HOW THE LOVER IS WITHOUT WILL.

LOVE hath my feet so bound,  
 Against my will I wait,  
 Still on forbidden ground  
 Held suppliant to my fate.  
 Since thou wouldest have me go,  
 Dear love, I would do so ;  
 But feet have not :—  
 Love roots them to the spot.

When thou hast bid me cease,  
 Well would it soothe my heart  
 To give thee ease,  
 And part !  
 But Love both hands and feet  
 Hath to his service sweet  
 Bound down, I may behave  
 But as his slave.

With me be vexed not, dear !  
 All that he bids me do,  
 I do it with such fear  
 And after rue !

Would I might do thy will,—  
Leave nothing told ;  
And thy content to fill  
Let my content go cold !

Alas, thus must I learn  
How souls in Hell have eyes !  
Here must I burn  
With sight of Paradise ;  
And touch, with hands unblest,  
The holy gates  
Which open out their rest  
To happier fates.

## POWERS OF AIR.

**D**EATH, with viewless nets, a snare  
Spreads in air, to catch my breath :  
Every time I laugh or sing,  
Through his web a breath breaks wing.  
Then, where that shows torn, he takes  
Other web and mends and makes ;  
Till at last the time he spends  
Bringeth fast his broken ends !

Love his viewless dart, despair,  
Shoots in air to pierce my heart :  
Every once that in my side  
Beats my heart a dart goes wide.  
Still with venom he anoints,  
Each afresh, a hundred points :  
Still with art pursues his feat  
To kill my heart upon its beat !

Breath and heart, at come and go,  
Still combine to meet the foe.  
Yet not long can breath be held,  
Yet not long can heart be whole :

HOW A LITTLE JOY ENDED A  
GREAT SORROW.

LAST night all sorrow stopped :  
Half unaware  
To hand a love-child dropped,  
And nestled there :  
And there would lie,  
And wanted not to fly !

Not Love Himself ; ah, no !  
The shadowy air  
Saw not that great God show  
His plumage fair :  
Yet one came near  
To be his messenger :

How, after many days,  
(The message saith)  
I, too, shall learn his ways  
And taste his breath :  
So he, to train me now,  
This sending doth allow :—

A momentary child  
 Of dusk and dew :  
 His fastened lips were mild,  
 Small joy he knew.  
 Yet, him to take,  
 My heart grew like to break.

“ Under this dusk,” I said,  
 “ For my desire ”  
 (And drew to mine his head)  
 “ Glows buried fire !  
 Drunk with this dew,  
 Great Love, I wait for you.”

Deepened the dusk, and dried  
 The dew : and “ Oh ! ”  
 Caught fast on sorrow cried  
 The child, “ let go !  
 My small heart breaks  
 If thine such wishing makes ! ”

So, still I lay, oh, still !  
 And let him go.  
 A shadow of Love’s great will  
 Was his to show :  
 But on my darkened sight  
 He burns like light !

Not Love Himself: ah, no !

The shadowy air

Saw not that great God go

On plumage fair :

Yet one came near

To be his messenger.

Thou, who hast given me this,

Give it a name !

Too true thy friendship is

To teach me shame.

Tell me his name who flew

Like dusk and dew ?

Time shall divide our days

And part our feet :

Yet, forth on severed ways,

When still hours beat,

He like a light

Shall burn my darkened sight !

Not Love Himself: ah, no !

The shadowy air

Saw not that great God go

On plumage fair :

Yet one came near

To be his messenger.

## THE DREAM

**I**N a fire that flew by night,  
 My delight  
 Came and murmured over thee,  
 "Dream of me, dream of me!"  
 In the stillness of thy room  
 Sleep took up her magic loom,  
 And with threads of slumbering fire  
 Wove desire across the gloom :  
 Dream of me !

Soft airs of the burning south  
 Touched thy mouth ;  
 Sweet sounds murmured over thee,  
 "Dream of me, dream of me!"  
 All her fragrance to disclose,  
 At thy casement showered a rose ;  
 And a sudden splash of scent  
 Loosed into the darkness went,  
 On what errand—ah, who knows ?—  
 Dream of me !

Hand-like, as the touch that stings  
 Silver strings,

Even so came sleep on thee :  
“ Dream of me, dream of me ! ”  
Ah, for sign thine arms lay wide ;  
Soft thy lips the darkness tried ;  
Till the dream, that on thee lit,  
Drew me to the midst of it ;—  
Drew me wholly to thy side.

Dream of me !

## THE ARROW AND THE BOW.

**T**HOU the arrow,  
 Fate the bow,  
 Though thy beauty  
 Lays me low,  
 Thou I know  
 Art not my foe :  
 After thee  
 Come rain and snow,  
 On my barrow.

Thou the sent  
 Of Fate the sender,  
 Be content  
 I know thee tender :  
 Though my heart  
 In me be rent,  
 Love to thee  
 Rent free I render.

Thou, dear swallow,  
 Didst out-run  
 Hindered summer  
 Hidden sun,

Warmth was none  
Where clouds lay dun ;  
Therefore thou  
Didst follow rest  
Where for nest  
A heart lay hollow.

Thou the arrow,  
Fate the cord,  
Captives both  
Are neither lord :  
Here not loath  
I room afford ;—  
In my breast  
The barb can rest,  
Where both board  
And bed are narrow.

## A PRAYER IN AUTUMN.

**F**LOCKS to the seaward of feathers; loud winging  
 of leaves and birds;  
 And a roaring wind in the grey of a headlong sky;  
 While autumn is hoarding her dead, and harries together  
 her herds,  
 Let her not cast me aside: in the waste of the year let  
 me die !

I have had summer in plenty, too long for the things I  
 could learn :—

Summer enough for a life, since spring was enough  
 for the dream !  
 When I hear the leaves sobbing around me, and wings  
 on a backward return,  
 In the eddy and roar of the year, let me go with the  
 stream !

O Love, when the first leaf unfastened I found you; you  
 came.

I grew blind in your gaze, and your lips to my lips  
 were aglow ;  
 And your hands and your feet lay upon me like fetters of  
 flame :—

O Love, now the last leaf unfastens, I lose you, you go !

## A PRAYER AGAINST SPRING.

THE year burns low, and the wind runs high,  
And withered leaves go whirling by:  
So, since the signal sounds, I cry,  
Let love come forth from me, and die !

The fair leaves, letting the stripped boughs be,  
Drop and drift from the wind-worn tree :  
O Love, too fair to belong to me,  
Fall from my heart, and set me free !

The sky is heavy with clouds in herds,  
With ruinous leaves and bevy of birds ;  
Earth her breast for the burial girds ;  
O Love, be loving with farewell words.

And going, for pity on kind days slain,  
Close fast the doors upon all my pain,  
Lest sorrow, and loss, and life be vain :  
And spring come back : and I love again !

## LOVE DEAD AND RAISED.

LOVE in my soul had digged himself a pit:  
"Here must my burial be!" he spake, and sighed,  
And half-dead echoes of the place replied,  
"Lie down and die, here of past pain be quit."  
So in the dark lay Love, and silence knit  
Kind healing fingers to the wounds left wide:  
And slowly at each gap the spilled blood dried:  
But, for His death, I found no grief in it.

There as Love lay by death, our peace grew old,  
Life was too far a thing to look upon,  
And all our anguish was a tale long told;  
Till light rolled back the stone and morning shone:  
Lo, there lay linen garments fold on fold  
Over an empty tomb, whence Love was gone.

## THE NAMING OF LOVE.

WHERE I lie wounded, if you came,  
 Belovèd of the hidden name,  
 And touched my wounds and healèd me,  
 And vanished, would not Christ's name be,  
 The name to know you by—for me ?

Oh, my belovèd, if I loose  
 All prayer in words for the dear use  
 Of such name-giving : fashion high  
 All that you were to name you by;  
 My tale thereof would seem a lie.

But let again your kind lips move  
 With music of the mind I love :  
 Then, though I hear not what they do  
 In syllables, they show forth you ;  
 There I behold you through and through !

Since ere they tasted death and night  
 Your lips once spake for my delight,  
 Their sound now draws me, and your face  
 Bends out of darkness to the embrace  
 Of arms where heaven has dwelt a space.

### III.







## CUPID AND CHRIST.

Q UICK came Cupid near to Christ,  
 At His Feet laid down his bow :  
 “ See, Thy Love hath all sufficed !  
 Burning in its heat and glow  
 Mortal hearts grow fired and iced :  
 Blunted, now, my weapons show.  
 Take my arrows, let me go !  
 Vainly now were hearts enticed.”  
 Christ said, “ No !  
 “ Take thine arrows, take them up !  
 From My Feet take up thy bow !  
 All that thou hast doffed, now dup !  
 Little will My people know,  
 How My Love hath drained their cup,  
 Shoot thine arrows, let them go !  
 On the hearts I cherish so,  
 Thou mayst yet break fast and sup.”  
 Cried Cupid, “ No !”  
 “ Ah ! ” spake Christ, “ and shall their shame  
 Shorten-in thy little day ?  
 While I wait, ’tis all the same :  
 If they yet can make thee gay

Have thy pleasure, play thy game !  
Little wounds shall lead the way  
Where, at last, My Wounds may stay :  
Flickering sparks may kindle flame.  
Run, and play !”

Cupid, as the Other bade,  
Took his arrows back, and played.  
Every arrow that he sends  
Mars a heart the Other mends !  
But, ere forth upon that raid,  
Once his heart to Christ's he laid,  
Murmuring yet half-afraid,—  
“ After, when the playing ends,  
When grow well the wounds I've made,  
We'll be friends ?”

## CHRIST AND DEATH.

CHRIST to Death's door came and knocked :  
While the door three hours stayed locked,  
Every passer turned and mocked  
Him that patient chose to stay,  
Waiting there on Death's delay.

At that door His Feet He stayed :  
There to beat His Heart He laid ;  
Whom to meet made Death afraid,  
That of Life could never want  
A more kingly suppliant.

Three long hours had Love to try  
Entrance Death would yet deny,  
Dreading still to have Him die.  
Only men with careless breath  
Doomed the Lord of Life to death.

## THE NEW ORPHEUS.

ORPHEUS once with touching keys  
Drew the rivers and the seas,  
Beasts and birds ; and all of these  
Heard the sweetness of his breath.  
Round him drawn to drowsy ease,  
Snakes, those hooded monks of death,  
Gleaned a pagan Shibboleth,  
That alone through music can  
All the ranks of nature span.

Spell-bound all they heard him then ;  
Each, a soul in fleshly pen,  
Filled with lusts or filled with fears,  
Opened quick prophetic ears.  
Over the dull minds of men  
Shot the eagle's kingly ken ;  
Straight the lion loosed his lust,  
And the red-deer leaned in trust  
Up against the tawny side :  
And the peacock lowered his pride,  
And the serpent left the dust.

Orpheus, singing, showed to these  
 Wider worlds and fairer seas,  
 Earth, between whose fruitful knees  
 All life fed and flowered, as trees  
 Feed and flower in sun and air :  
 Plenty so stood everywhere.

Soon the singer's song was done :  
 Earth, in anguish for her son,  
 Saw the reddened river run :  
 Where the faint and bleeding head,  
 Echoing its music fled,  
 Down the stream to darkness hurled  
 Half the wisdom of the world.

Yet, to cover that high crime,  
 Orpheus came a second time.  
 Nothing in his hand bore he,  
 Save the imprint plain to see  
 Of a starry mystery,  
 Straining out of thick-set wings,  
 Lending threads of fire for strings;  
 Till it seemed to be a lyre  
 Stretched to earth from heavenly things,

When St. Francis touched the chord,  
 Forth the hidden music poured  
 All the praises of its Lord,

And the rumour grew so sweet,  
 Birds and beasts were at his feet.  
 In their breasts a far-off tale  
 Of old Orpheus did prevail:  
 And they cried, no more dejected,  
 “Our Messiah, the long expected,  
 Cometh now with wisdom meet  
 In our midst to find his seat.”

So the second Orpheus spake  
 Little things for Love’s great sake.  
 Sweetness of that uttered word  
 All the beasts, but no man, heard.  
 Father Francis, grant me bliss  
 In my darkness, if it is  
 Possible to tell of this !

“ Little brothers ” (did you say ?)  
 “ Yours must be the later day,—  
 Not so very far away.  
 Ye, that have more feet than wit,  
 Shall not lag because of it.  
 Thou, man’s minister of speed,  
 Doubt not thou dost fit God’s need :  
 So, by Him decreed, thy course  
 Trains thee to be Israel’s horse.  
 Once on earth a prophet’s eyes  
 Saw a chariot mount the skies ;

And before each burning tyre  
 Horses sprang like flames of fire.  
 Doubt not that to wait God's need  
 Still in heavenly stall they feed,  
 Ministers to His desire.

“Come meek ass, and hear me tell ;  
 Surely Christ with thee doth dwell !  
 Thou, on whom He once would sit,  
 Bear'st His cross because of it.  
 At the entry of that town,  
 Where men threw palm-branches down,  
 Thou wast bearing Death and Myrrh,  
 O thou little Christopher !  
 Not upon thy forehead yet  
 May His blessed sign be set ;  
 So, while wisdom in thee lack,  
 Light His yoke upon thy back.

“ Little birds, whose tongues and wings  
 Seem so full of heavenly things,  
 Do not doubt that song and flight  
 Are most pleasing in His sight.  
 When the Spirit showed to men  
 Bird-like came the vision then :  
 Would He cast the form of dove  
 Round His glory without love ?

“ Deep the ways of Love, and high  
 Ever, when God’s Finger wrote  
 Word for man, dumb beast stood by.  
 With His people’s sins the goat  
 To the desert crept to die :  
 When blind wrath in Balaam smote,  
 Smitten beast had clearer eye  
 To behold bright heavenly things—  
 Sword made bare and barrier wings.  
 Sheep, with shepherds watching nigh,  
 Heard the high Angelic note ;  
 Near the crib an ox stood by ;  
 And a dove, when ark did float,  
 Symbol bore by olive-branch  
 God would yet the waters staunch.

“ Listen, last, what shape of guest  
 In the everlasting skies  
 Standeth high among the blest  
 Where God’s kingdom has to be :  
 Beasts whose wings are full of eyes  
 Gather there and bow the knee :  
 None is greatest, none is least,  
 All the Light of Godhead see.  
 One is like a flying bird,  
 One is like a beast of prey,  
 After these there comes a third

Like an ox that eateth hay ;  
 And with these, behold, a man  
 Equal : none divide them can :  
 None is greater there than they.

“ When the world lay drowned in sin,  
 When the Heavens with wrath were dark,  
 And all creatures entered in  
 At God’s bidding to the ark ;  
 That same ark was but the sign  
 Of a fold yet more divine  
 Where the Shepherd’s Face shall shine :  
 Where His Arms shall draw to rest  
 Sheep and goats against His Breast,  
 Where your heads will lie by mine.”

Love Eternal, if Thou didst  
 Bid a child be in our midst  
 To declare the heavenly way :  
 Then was not Saint Francis he ?  
 And must not his wisdom be  
 Truest truth, and brightest day ?  
 Therefore, Francis, pray for me !  
 And, to pay my debt to thee,  
 Ever when I bow the knee  
 I for bird and beast will pray.

## SAINT AND SINNER.

UNKNOWN Saint, whoe'er thou be,  
 Vigilant in prayer for me,  
 God have pity on thy prayer,  
 Lest in vain  
 Thou dost drain celestial air !

“ Nay, no indrawn breath can taste  
 This pure air to give forth waste.  
 Therefore, if for thee I pray,  
 Some far day  
 God shall let me have my way.

“ On these harvest-fields of praise,  
 Bowing down at God’s great gaze,  
 In the wheat can there be tares ?  
 Are His Feet  
 Bound about by withered prayers ? ”

Ah, for what past sin of thine  
 Hast thou made a prayer of mine ?  
 What I may to-morrow do  
 Thou a thousand years must rue :

In His sight, who sees, must say—  
“Christ, I did it yesterday!”

“ Then shall speak the Often-slain,  
‘ Yesterday I bore the pain  
All at once for him and thee :  
Call, and bid him come to Me ! ’ ”

So thou prayest for me yet !  
And for thee  
I will pray, lest utterly  
I be lost—if thou forget !

## BONDS.

**A**S a stream that runs to sea  
 Ever by its banks is led,  
 And by windings shepherded ;  
 So in bonds though bound I be,  
 I through limits reach to Thee.

These dear bonds wherein I chafe,  
 Wishing, “Would that I were free !”  
 These it is which hold me safe,  
 Bringing me at last to Thee  
 As the stream is brought to sea.

Penning it from side to side,  
 Shepherding its little streams,  
 Every bank a barrier seems :  
 Yet the stream would soon be dried  
 If the channel were too wide.

Here, fast bound by bank and fence  
 Where I have not space to spread  
 Still my body, chafed by sense,  
 Feels a spirit cross its bed,  
 As a stream goes current-led.

Human minds so move about,  
Only if fenced round with doubt ;  
Only if denied their grasp  
Gain the everlasting clasp.  
Only streams which fettered be  
Fret their way at last to sea.

So, with limits for my guide,  
Safe, I shall not wander wide ;  
But, where we are meant to meet,  
Find in Thee the Life denied :  
Falling low shall kiss Thy Feet,  
Reaching far shall touch Thy Side.

## LITTLE DEATH.

O H, Death, at thee I may afford to laugh,  
 Who, thinking to take all, canst have but half.  
 Thou, old mortality, art but a mole;  
 Blind burrowing here thou canst not hurt my soul.  
 More than thou askest, lightly would I do :  
 Bid me one mile with thee ; I will go two !  
 Or, wouldst thou have this cloak I wear as mask,  
 Then take my coat as well, before thou ask ;  
 And if to smite me shamefaced thou dost seek,  
 Strike with an equal shame the other cheek.  
 Hale me to prison, whence I may not budge  
 Till debt be paid : yet thou art not my Judge ;  
 There is too much in me has yet to die,—  
 Would thou couldst keep it from His awful Eye.  
 But if, being dead, I could not feel His Breath,  
 I should have entered into second death.  
 Let Death his sentence deeply root in me,  
 Yet One shall root it out with pardon free :  
 If I be dust my God will send His rain,  
 And make it fit to bring forth fruit again :  
 Or if foul mud, He shall make shine His sun,  
 Till all impurity from me be run.  
 Welcome thou art, poor Death, with me to dwell,  
 Lodge where thou canst awhile, then fare thee well !

## IV.







## THE LAST LAUGH.

*(On a child playing by the sea-shore.)*

**S**HELLS at sixes and sevens,  
 What had you there, little son ?  
 A glimpse of the under-heavens,  
 When the work of the world is done,  
 When Time shall have loosed from their courses  
 The stars and the moon and sun.

When, with a wearied gesture,  
 Earth to be loosed of spells,  
 Casts as an outworn vesture  
 Her woods and her hills and dells ;  
 And sounds are as ghosts in the silence,  
 Or whisper of waves in shells.

Life and its tragic actors  
 Quit of their masks of mirth :  
 Death on his old detractors  
 Dancing for all he's worth :  
 What a harlequinade of laughter  
 Shall tickle the ribs of earth !

The clouds will gather their thunder,  
 But never a face grow pale ;  
 The storms will behold in wonder  
 High seas, but without a sail ;  
 And never a ship go under  
 At the call of the strongest gale.

Though Etna to ease his belly  
 May open his mouth and spit,  
 Or boil the seas to a jelly  
 With never a fish in it ;—  
 As a child where a shore lies shelly  
 Old Death at his shards will sit.

Then, in a whole world emptied,  
 With nothing to lose or win,  
 With nowhere a heart to be tempted  
 And nowhere a sin to sin,  
 Will a god's face not grow foolish,  
 And will not a fiend's grow thin ?

For broken are roof-tree and rafter ;  
 And prayer is gone forth like smoke,  
 And praise, which the gods came after,  
 Like cloud at a strong wind's stroke ;  
 And the tombs may be shaken with laughter,  
 But none can enjoy the joke.

## THE RETURN OF THE NATIVE.

THE ghost came back when frost lay cold  
 Across his father's farm ;  
 And stayed where huddled flocks kept fold,  
 His crook upon his arm.

He in the moonlight looked at peace,  
 And piped a pastoral tune :  
 He seemed a shepherd of the fleece  
 That drifts across the moon.

He sang, “ Full many moors away  
 Lie other flocks in fold ;  
 And there to guard them night and day  
 There hangs a body cold.

“ There through the fleeces all the night,  
 Hard push the heavy rams :  
 And there, when winter downs are white  
 The ewes put forth their lambs.

“ Yet little kens a body cold  
 How, at his father's farm,  
 Long nights he used to watch the fold,  
 His crook upon his arm.

“I pipe the songs he piped of yore,  
I watch the homely light :  
The native at his father’s door  
Comes not indoors to-night.”

All night he watched upon the croft  
Until the breath of day :  
Then heaved his shepherd’s crook aloft,  
And sighed himself away.

## THE RETURN OF THE BELOVED.

OUT of the heart of night a hand  
 Of darkness touched my side ;  
 Light of my life, I saw you stand,  
 And dreamed you had not died.

“ Oh, you look weary, you look old,  
 And heavy hangs your head ;  
 Come from the night and from the cold,  
 And creep into my bed.”

The fates that leagued against us still  
 Had fallen away in fear,  
 When warm within your living will  
 You sought to draw me near.

But my quick soul with hard denial  
 Smote on its doors in pain ;  
 “ Go back,” it cried, “ Beloved, awhile ;  
 And die, and come again ! ”

Nay ! for the bargain that we drove,  
 Thou bitter soul, lie still !  
 Such comfort from the kindly grave  
 Had done my dear no ill !

## HIC JACET.

**K**INDLING far ahead of day  
 All the fields lay yellow :  
 Morning eyes looked back to say,  
 “Life’s a winsome fellow !”

She rose up, oh, she rose up ;  
 Softly came she to him,  
 Bit his bread and drained his cup :  
 In a while she knew him.

She lay down, oh, she lay down,  
 Drooped like a tired starling :  
 “Shut the doors of all the town !  
 Death’s the dearer darling !”

Said Death to Life, a little loath,  
 “I take, since you bequeath her !”  
 Here she lies who loved them both :  
 She, the loved of neither !

## THE RED FIELD.

**I**N the field my lover found me,  
Who dared not be his bride ;  
There with the corn-stems round me  
I lay down at his side.

In the field my brother slew me,  
To shield our father's pride  
From the shame that had gone through me,  
And the babe within my side.

In the field my lover slew him,  
Before my blood had dried :  
Then with his own sword to him,  
Self-slain my lover died.

Think of us, all folks, kindly  
Here, where we all abide !  
We are friendly who loved so blindly,  
Now we lie side by side.



## THE MAN IN POSSESSION.

**T**HROUGH all the long-deserted house  
Moves nothing but the furtive mouse ;  
And at the outer casement, hark !  
The wind that does not fear the dark.

Down wind, down rain, down leaves, down heart !  
Here fear and I can never part :  
Though all the year 's an emptying town,  
My sorrow never shall lie down.

Here sit we silent, eye to eye,  
Waiting to see each other die ;  
Opposing wills to hide or seek  
Which be the stronger, which the weak.

Oh, wind, thou doest thy work alone !  
Thou hast no cause to cry or moan.  
Here I, till doomsday tolls its note,  
Sit holding terror by the throat !

With nothing else to do, I wait  
The onward coming of my fate :  
When every straining sinew slips,  
And terror has me on the lips.

## A. GARDEN ENCLOSED.

DEEP in this garden, closely fenced  
And wardered by a myriad eyes,  
A world from time and space condensed  
Feast for the weary idler lies.

Here at his earth-works plain to see  
Laborious toils the Roman ant ;  
Greek-like, the honey-laden bee  
Mellifluous hangs from plant to plant.

The wary spider sports his thread  
And devil-like receives his toll ;  
And underground with buried head  
Grubs old mortality the mole.

Here wisdom waits the idler's look :  
The mind is free to roam or halt ;  
The garden is my history book,  
Its walls are my ancestral vault.

A book with fair devices strawed,  
Lavish in rosemary and sage ;  
Where all the margin-paths run broad  
Around the decorative page.

Or, open to the skies, a vault  
Where basking sunnily I lie ;  
And there, forgetting life 's a fault,  
With foot in earth prepare to die.

## THE OPEN GRAVE.

**F**AREWELL now, Life, and kiss thou me !  
 And if men ask thee how I died,  
**S**ay that I went with ill-content  
 And backward looks from thy dear side.

And if they, coming near my tomb,  
 Shall listen, and shall fail to hear  
 Me sobbing in that narrow room ;  
 It is because I am not there.

But to the wind this breath that goes,—  
 There hearkening thou shalt hear me sound :  
 And count my dust wherever blows  
 The restless dust along the ground.

Since here I lived, where can I die ?  
 A breath to dust that will not burn,  
 My ghost in every wind goes by,  
 And in my grave I turn and turn !

It is the dead that keep life warm :  
For, underneath the hills and rocks,  
Dead lovers fill the ground with storm,  
And drive the roaring equinox.

Oh, doubt not that the doom which gave,  
To earth her portion never said  
The dust should sleep ! Where is the grave  
So deep as to contain its dead ?

## ADVOCATUS DIABOLI.

**Y**OU are the Saint ; the sinner I ;  
Now both of us come here to die.  
You did the right, and I the wrong,  
I was the weak, and you the strong ;  
Yet, at our two extremes, we doff  
Not much with this our taking off :  
Diversely we learn not to grieve  
For relics of the life we leave.  
If distaste for the world were all  
Man need acquire,—I, in my fall,  
Have found as good a way to learn  
As you the vanities you spurn.  
I have gone through, with mother wit,  
And tested all the cheats of it :  
You gave your judgment at hearsay,  
And passed by on the other way ;  
Forgetting, giving God His due,  
You owed the Devil some duty too :—  
A mere endeavour to be first  
Exact about the thing you cursed !  
With a too hungry ear you gleaned  
God's ipse dixit on the fiend,

And cursed with sanctimonious awe  
 The features which *you* never saw.  
 Horns, hoofs, a tail, wings like a bat,—  
 Ex parte statements such as that,  
 Are fit description, you aver,  
 For bright down-fallen Lucifer !  
 Yet *I* might tell you other things  
 Of the far shadowing of his wings :  
 Light 's a strong thing, yet darkness is  
 The nature of the Infinities.  
 Maybe light conquers where it prides,—  
 But, where it cannot, darkness lies :  
 And if God is the Truth, the Light,  
 Satan is yet the Truth, the Night !

You are the strong, and I the weak,  
 Yet both have gained the strength we seek :  
 Our Gods have brought us to this hour  
 To frustrate the resisting power :—  
 You, to reject the power of Hell,  
 I, to reject your Godhead. Well,  
 I am the weak, you are the strong :—  
 Unto my weakness doth belong  
 Its victory, its power to do  
 All that your strength has done for you.  
 Whence learn, of Those where we belong,  
 Which is the weaker, which the strong !  
 I, the inert one, gravitate  
 Toward the greater bulk and weight,

While you toil up on troubled wings  
 To the minority of things !  
 Yet I would say—lest it appear  
 I wish to cast at you the sneer  
 You cast toward the horns and hoof,—  
 Minority is no disproof.  
 You cast it in the teeth of sin,  
 Heaven's big Reserves are bound to win :  
 And he laughs best, so people say,  
 Who laughs the latest in the day.  
 You seek life : think you, life is good,  
 The Tree of Knowledge fit for food ?  
 Then should you surely be content,  
 Since life is God's experiment,  
 Showing him flattery by competing,  
 To prove the pudding in the eating !  
 But "Oh," you say, "the thing's gone wrong !"  
 So there, the Devil proves too strong !  
 Was he not right, who held in scorn  
 The feast God set, to thrust his thorn  
 Into the sides of them that taste,  
 Bidding them from the banquet haste  
 For refuge under his large wings  
 From this conditional state of things ?  
 Conditional made absolute,  
 Might you not relish fleshly fruit,  
 And gladly let your senses loose  
 To one long luscious draught of juice :

Considering *that* a Heavenly state,  
Where appetites perpetuate ?  
You aim at Heaven for goal and prize :  
Yet it is out of hoodwinked eyes :  
Blinkered you watch life's transient hour  
Of withering leaf and falling flower,  
Where fagged-out vices prowl and perch,  
Jackals and vultures to the church !

The secret is, as I suspect,  
Life's to attain, or to reject.  
I taste, and say, upon the whole  
I do not wish to have a soul.  
You do not taste: yet take for text  
“To be continued in our next !”

## A PRAYER TO DEATH.

**D**EATH, have thou pity on us all,  
Leave us not lingering when we call !  
Before thee we make haste to fall,  
For all our lives are in thy thrall,  
Death !

No man so fleet of foot may be,  
But each step draws him on to thee :  
Never so stricken and blind are we,  
But at the last we come to see  
Death.

The shaken doors of birth divide,  
And, driven from its mother's side,  
The suppliant life leaps out to hide ;  
Shuddering to find itself denied  
Death.

Thou our first parents didst inspire,  
Who, facing the Eternal ire,  
Drew down to earth forbidden fire,  
And, tasting, had at their desire  
Death.

Thy servant Samson shook the gates  
 Of towns, slew armies, drew dead weights  
 Of thunder o'er a thousand fates,  
 To fashion from his loves and hates  
 Death !

Noah watched when all the world lay flat,  
 A watery waste to wonder at :  
 Throned upon floods of death he sat,  
 Yet wrecked himself on Ararat,  
 Death !

O Thou, our father ere we came  
 To being, hallowed be Thy name,  
 Thy kingdom bring, thy will proclaim,  
 Till heaven and earth perform the same,  
 Death !

Give us each day our daily bread ;—  
 Give us the sins wherein we shed  
 Our strength, till weakness in us spread,  
 And we be lying in one bed :  
 Death !

From life that tempts not, do thou lead !  
 Out of its evils hold us freed ;  
 For comfort of our dying need,  
 In our sad bodies sow thy seed,  
 Death !

O, Thou, for whom in earth and star  
Kingdom, and power, and glory are,  
Make perfect soon the clay we mar ;  
And from fresh quickening keep us far,  
Death !

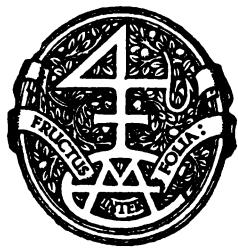


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